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ABSTRACT

Black Americans are represented disproportionately among the chronically poor, unemployed, and underemployed. Their most urgent problems can best be addressed by focusing on three overlapping areas: the progress of the economy, the condition of the black family, and educational opportunity. First, blacks have always been structurally excluded from the American economy, but they are suffering from problems that ostensibly have little to do with race. These include deindustrialization, shifting employment patterns, and changing central city demographics. Achieving full employment requires: (1) rational governemnt involvement in the economy; (2) a social contract between business, labor, professional associations, and government; and (3) the gradual replacement of stigmatizing public assistance programs with more universal forms of social welfare. On the other hand, the present black family crisis--characterized by the growth of poor, female-headed households--is directly related to racism. Government programs addressing this problem must be redesigned and reconceptualized. Black youth must be encouraged to pursue education and delay family formation, and the stability of black husband-wife families must be reinforced. Finally, in the area of education, blacks face three basic problems: (1) lack of access to quality public education in grades K-12; (2) underrepresentation in postsecondary degree programs; and (3) adult illiteracy. Solutions must come from every level of society, from the school district to the Federal government. The Federal government must play a continuing role in financing equal educational opportunity and enforcing school desegregation. (KH)

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# A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
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In 1981 and 1982, thirty prominent black scholars met in Tarrytown, New York, to explore the vast array of problems black Americans face in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Out of their deliberations emerged a statement setting forth three areas of urgent concern: the economy, the black family, and education. The statement was reviewed and refined in a meeting between members of the Tarrytown group and members of the Black Leadership Forum in early 1983. The final statement is presented as the framework of a strategy for a full-scale assault on social and racial injustice in America.

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With a foreword by

KENNETH B. CLARK AND JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN

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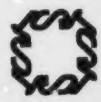

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# Foreword

W. E. B. DuBois stated in the early 1940s that the most difficult stage in the struggle for racial justice in America would be reached when it became clear that fundamental inequities persisted in spite of litigation, legislation, and direct confrontation. The success or failure of the civil rights struggle, he said, would ultimately be determined by the ability of a highly trained group of black scholars to use their disciplined intelligence as effective weapons in the battle for social justice.

DuBois' prescience may be seen by the profound racial inequities that persist today. They persist despite the progress generated by the *Brown* decision of 1954, despite the civil rights laws of 1964 and 1965, despite the non-violent civil disobedience movement directed by Martin Luther King, Jr., and despite the sporadic urban riots of the late 1960s. We are indeed at the most difficult stage in the quest for racial justice.

Ironically, the successes of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, achieved by methods appropriate to that time, revealed the depth and complexity of American racism and led, in a sense, to the current need to re-examine some basic assumptions and to search for remedies that will be effective in the 1980s.

Contemporary racial problems cannot be dramatized by television pictures of cattle prods being used against those seeking relief from blatant forms of injustice. The chief barriers to racial justice today are subtle and much less conducive to media coverage. Such problems as inferior schools in northern cities that resist attempts at desegregation, deteriorating urban ghettos, persistent unemployment and underemployment, and the myriad handicaps of single-parent black families do not elicit the same moral indignation on the part of the American public as did earlier forms of injustice.

Americans must be shown that the problems at this stage are no less intolerable than the earlier ones. Then, appropriate responses must be developed and effectively communicated. These are the tasks that DuBois assigned to the educationally and intellectually advantaged members of the black community.

In the late 1970s, a number of black scholars, under the leadership of the late Judge William Hastie, came together informally and quietly to exchange ideas concerning the increasingly complex and difficult state of the civil rights movement. The early meetings of this group centered on the

rise of black separatism and particularly the frustration that young black college students expressed in their regressive demands for a return to racially segregated facilities. Later meetings involved discussions and suggestions on how to address these problems within the larger framework of seeking racial justice. No written statement emerged, largely because of the sporadic and *ad hoc* nature of the meetings. Some members of the group, however, continued to give thought to the problems canvassed and to explore strategies for their solution.

In 1979, the Joint Center asked the two of us to prepare a statement that would set forth some of the major problems black Americans faced in the 1980s—"to sketch out a common experience in the vineyard of civil rights," as the Joint Center put it, "and to alert us to the unfinished tasks which lie ahead." The result was an essay called *The Nineteen Eighties: Prologue and Prospect.* We observed that, in spite of landmark court decisions, major legislation at the federal and state levels, and executive initiatives of an unprecedented nature, racial problems in the United States persisted, especially in the areas of employment, education, housing, and family life. We concluded that it was difficult, "at the beginning of the 1980s, to be optimistic about the future of blacks in American society." It was imperative, we said, "that new perspectives, strategies, and methods be developed to deal with today's complex racial realities."

*The Nineteen Eighties: Prologue and Prospect* drew considerable response and suggestions for further study and elaboration. Some responses emphasized the importance not only of developing and refining ideas but of making certain that they become a part of the mechanisms for the improvement of society. These suggestions led the Joint Center to call a conference at Tarrytown, New York, on July 29-30, 1981. Some thirty citizens and scholars met for two days and explored the vast array of problems black Americans face in the closing decades of the twentieth century.[1] Using *Prologue and Prospect* as a point of departure, the participants brought to the discussion their own special skills in such areas as law, politics, sociology, history, anthropology, and literature.

While the discussions were rewarding, there was not sufficient time to delineate the problem areas requiring the most urgent attention. But the group agreed that the ideas explored at the conference should become, as one participant put it, "elements in the action process." Consequently, the Joint Center convened a second Tarrytown conference on November 19-21, 1982, out of which emerged the statement that follows.

As part of the "action process," the Joint Center, in cooperation with the Johnson Foundation, convened a third conference involving representatives of the Tarrytown group and members of the Black Leadership Forum.[2] The

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[1] Participants in the Tarrytown conferences are listed in Appendix B.

[2] Participants in the Wingspread conference are listed in Appendix C.

purpose of the meeting, held at the foundation's Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin, on March 23-25, 1983, was to review and refine the Tarrytown statement.

We hope that the ideas contained in this document will encourage widespread discussion and that out of such discussions will come strategies to achieve social and racial justice in America.

Kenneth B. Clark
John Hope Franklin
*May 1983*

# Introduction

At least three societies exist in America today: the mainstream, the assimilated minorities, and the excluded. These three societies are separate and unequal and the disparities among them threaten to destroy the national fabric.

The excluded are a relatively new social species, comprising people who are chronically poor, unemployed, or underemployed. Black Americans, because of historic problems of discrimination, are disproportionately represented among the excluded. Their condition worsens. At a time of national economic stringency, affirmative action and "safety net" commitments are vanishing. The resistance to social equity is fierce.

Indeed, now that the drive for civil rights of the 50s, 60s, and 70s has been blunted, the fundamental question is squarely before us: Is America willing to support equitable social policies? The present answer to that question is a resounding "no." That answer is stimulated by a powerful and continuing climate of racism, and it has been given force and virulence by the nation's experience with the worst economic conditions since the Great Depression and by long-term economic uncertainties.

Under the best of circumstances, blacks have faced major obstacles in their quest for full social and economic citizenship. But as the economic pie has stopped growing over the past several years, national cynicism and misanthropy have reached new peaks. The current situation differs significantly from the past in that there is not only resistance to further advances toward equity but also a deep resentment in some quarters toward the advances already made. That resentment has been forged into sharp attacks on efforts, such as affirmative action, that were designed to continue the drive toward equity. The new atmosphere of racism with its code-word vocabulary—"reverse discrimination," "excessive domestic spending," "make-work jobs," and so on—is more pervasive than at any time since the early years of the century. Moreover, natural and in some cases historic allies now view each other with suspicion when they are not actually pursuing divisive socio-political strategies.

For far too long the poor, the black, the brown, and the powerless have been blamed for America's social and economic problems. The fundamental truth is that far from causing the problems, they have been particularly victimized by them. For example, no group has suffered a more devastating

assault upon its family structure than black Americans. With the possible exception of Native Americans, no other group has suffered greater deprivation of educational opportunity.

Unless major efforts quickly bring the excluded into the mainstream, the condition of a large portion of the black population will deteriorate beyond the point where any program of intervention can be effective. We believe the most urgent problems facing the excluded blacks can best be addressed by focusing on three areas: the progress of the economy, the condition of the black family, and educational opportunity. These critical areas clearly overlap, and none can be dealt with alone. But they provide a framework for constructing solutions to the real, structural failures in the society and not just the superficial cracks and tears. If comprehensive action is taken in these areas, not only blacks but American society as a whole will benefit.

A major barrier to such action is the short-sightedness from which this country has always suffered: Its refusal to understand that to exclude blacks from the mainstream undermines the society at large. This short-sightedness also prevents America from understanding that domestic racial inequities weaken its position in the world—at precisely the time when global forces increasingly influence the internal as well as the external policies of the United States.

The continuing conflict between the United States and the USSR, with its worldwide implications, has led this country to allocate to defense budgets a surfeit of resources that might otherwise be available to improve the quality of life for American citizens. The worldwide energy crisis and international trade problems reinforce the intimate relationship between domestic and foreign policies. So, too, do the increased mobility of capital, the rapid advance in technology, and the concomitant loss of jobs and entire industries to overseas markets. The search by millions of refugees for havens is further evidence of the impossibility of isolation. In short, our earth has shrunk so much in this century that significant human and political problems can only be understood in global terms. We believe that no material plan of action can succeed that fails to acknowledge the global context within which any reform must take place.

We believe, too, that Americans must face the likelihood that greater—not less—government intervention and planning are required to revitalize the national economy. Rather than flinching from an enhanced government role, we must proceed intelligently to develop new and effective roles for government as well as to adapt models and experiences of other countries to American traditions and circumstances. Just as social security was borrowed from Europe and adapted to America in the 1930s, so the challenge today is to look for new ideas to revive our economy.

Unfortunately, the last presidential election helped to foster the myth that there was a leviathan federal government on Americans' backs and that it had to be lifted, however painfully, in pursuit of the American dream. The

truth, of course, is that the role of our government in the social sector is far smaller than in other countries, including Great Britain, Germany, and France. To be sure, Western European economies are embattled today, but theirs would appear to be a more constructive and promising approach, even as they struggle. Indeed, the problems of those societies as well as our own signal structural defects in the global order, which defy parochial solutions. The lesson is clear. Just as minority problems often demand mainstream solutions, national economic malfunctions often demand international remedies.

But while the remedies must be both broad and fundamental, they must not take for granted that their effects will trickle down to those who have been left further and further behind in the past. The present economic upswing may continue, for example, without ever restoring jobs to all who have lost them, and without bringing down the unconscionable unemployment rates for blacks even to the level of current, "unacceptable" unemployment rates for whites. The renewed national interest in education policy could leave blacks in ghetto schools at an even greater disadvantage, if programs are not targeted at the desperate conditions of these institutions. Increasing opportunities for some may be no opportunity at all for poverty-stricken, female-headed households and the children raised in them. A rising tide may simply swamp boats with hulls decaying from centuries of abuse and neglect.

Americans must recognize both the immorality and the practical cost of perpetuating a class of the excluded. And a true commitment to end this state of affairs must accept specially targeted programs as an indispensable component.

This is by no means to say we do not seek coalitions with other groups. Under present national policies, Americans of many backgrounds are rapidly joining the ranks of the victims. Out of this dismal present, the prospect of potent coalition politics looms far more promisingly than ever before. Linkages among blacks and disadvantaged Hispanics, chastened organized labor, radicalized farmers, disenchanted women, across-class peace movements, and others can surely materialize.

But coalitions cannot succeed without a program. This statement should serve to indicate the needs and aspirations that must be the basis of any program the black community can unequivocally support.

# The Economy

One of the legacies of racial oppression in America is that a large segment of the black population is structurally excluded from the American economy. This heterogeneous grouping of families and individuals is, in several important respects, more socially and economically isolated today than it was before the civil rights victories of the 1960s. Unlike stable working class and middle-class black families, this impoverished population has not only experienced growing problems of joblessness (unemployment, underemployment, and labor dislocation), but it has also been handicapped by rising rates of single parent (mostly female-headed) households, out-of-wedlock births, welfare dependency, and violent crime.

Although current racial discrimination helps to perpetuate these forms of social dislocation, they have been exacerbated in recent years by problems in the American economy that ostensibly have little or nothing to do with race, problems that fall heavily on much of the black population but require solutions that confront the broader issues of societal organization.

## PROBLEMS IN THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

For several decades urban America has been undergoing what seems to be an irreversible process of deindustrialization. Our larger cities are being transformed from centers of production and distribution of physical goods to centers of finance, information exchange, trade, government services, and administration. This has resulted in the loss of millions of manufacturing, wholesale, and retail jobs since 1948, a trend that has accelerated since 1967. (New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia alone lost a combined total of about 800,000 manufacturing, wholesale, and retail jobs between 1967 and 1977.) At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of jobs spawned by new technology and the rapidly advancing "post-industrial society." These jobs usually have new and higher training and educational requirements, which the disadvantaged, more often than not, are powerless to meet. Accompanying these shifts in employment patterns have been changes in the demographic composition of central cities from predominantly white (mainly European) to predominantly black, Hispanic, and other minority groups. As a result, not only has total population size of central

cities decreased, but the aggregate personal income levels have decreased as well.

The combined effect of these technology/employment shifts and demographic changes has been a growing mismatch between the skill or training level of the population and the urban job opportunities; increased ghettoization; and the crystallization of poverty. Institutional problems (such as inadequate schools and municipal services, and the deterioration of commercial and residential areas) and social dislocations (such as joblessness, family deterioration, and welfare dependency) are at a crisis level.

If urban blacks are experiencing growing problems in "post-industrial society," the nation's 6,000,000 rural blacks have also been victimized by recent changes in the American economy. The rural black poor have always been a significant part of the American poverty population, but in recent years their situation has been complicated by the increasing mechanization of agriculture. In the Mississippi Delta, for example, the black part of the economy has been virtually eliminated, leading one observer to note that "what was once malnutrition and accumulated disease has become virtual starvation." In recent years, rural blacks have sought relief from declining employment opportunities in agriculture by migrating to urban centers, but this option is now less favorable, owing to the fiscal crises in both southern and northern metropolises that have accompanied nationwide economic stagnation.

For all these reasons, we believe policies that do not take into account the changing characteristics of the national economy—including its rate of growth and demand for labor, including factors that affect industrial employment such as investment and technology, and including demographic changes that accompany industrial transformations—cannot possibly respond effectively to the economic and social dislocations of low-income blacks. This segment of the population is particularly vulnerable to the structural economic changes that have accompanied the shift from goods-producing to service-producing industries, such as the increasing segmentation of the labor market, the growing use of industrial technology, and the relocation of industries out of the central city to the suburbs, to the sunbelt, and even to other countries around the world. As emphasized in a recent study on deindustrialization of America, blacks are not only "concentrated within central cities and, in those regions of the country where plant closings and economic dislocations have been most pronounced," they also tend to be "concentrated in industries that have borne the brunt of recent closings."

## TOWARD A NEW ECONOMIC POLICY

Economic stagnation not only creates massive dislocations, it also necessitates greater expenditures to ameliorate human suffering. For

example, for every 1 percent yearly rise in unemployment, the government has to pay 20 billion dollars in unemployment compensation, welfare, and health costs. Thus, in the face of a contracting tax base and taxpayer revolts, the excluded are caught in a bone-crushing vise. Unfortunately, unlike in many other western democracies, the United States government has had little leverage over either the capital market or the labor market, even during periods preceding the current "free market" approach to economic problems.

There are compelling justifications for the government to help generate conditions that provide a job at a decent wage level for everyone willing and able to work. *We emphasize full employment at a decent wage level to underscore the importance of providing working families with an income that not only allows them to exist above mere subsistence levels but also strengthens work incentives.*

To achieve the goal of full employment at a decent wage level, we believe there has to be *rational* government involvement in the economy. This might include, among other things, the use of institutional mechanisms such as tax credits and direct grants that could direct more capital toward rebuilding urban infrastructure and thereby create jobs, and the use of a variety of tax and income supplementation schemes to raise the wage levels of the less skilled jobs. Regardless of which specific actions are taken, however, government involvement in the economy should be based on rational schemes designed to insure that all Americans have access to opportunities for economic success. To put the matter slightly differently, we are recommending a shift from ad hoc strategies to a comprehensive and rational economic policy—a shift from strategies designed to meet immediate problems to strategies thought out in advance and consistently pursued.

A rational economic policy would systematically address questions usually ignored when ad hoc strategies are discussed and recommended, including questions concerning the relative impact of proposed economic programs on labor markets in different regions of the country; the variety and volume of jobs to be generated; the extent to which these jobs will be available to residents in low-income neighborhoods; the quality of these jobs in terms of wages and stability; the extent to which the proposed economic programs enhance the employment opportunities of both the currently unemployed and the new entrants into the labor market; and whether the benefits accrued from economic development and employment represent reasonable returns on public investment.

For all these reasons, *we especially see the need for the creation of a general economic policy (integrating social policy with industrial and labor market policies) built upon a social contract between business, labor, professional associations, and government.* This contract would be the foundation for a consensus-making organization working more or less

within a public framework to bargain and initiate policies on questions of economic growth, unemployment, prices, taxes, balance of payments, and social policy. In periods of rising expectations and slow economic growth, such an arrangement would compel labor—concerned with wages, social security, and working conditions—to be attentive to matters of productivity, the requirements of investments, and the levels of inflation; and would compel employers—concerned with profits, investments, and productivity—to be attentive to matters of social policy (including various forms of welfare policies, housing, health, and education).

Thus, a general economic policy would result in long-term planning to promote both sustained full employment and economic growth, not only in certain "privileged" areas but also in areas where the poor are concentrated. Such an economic policy would ensure price and wage stability, maintain favorable conditions of employment, protect equal opportunity employment, and develop and integrate manpower training programs with education programs.

*After full employment is reached, current forms of means-tested and stigmatizing public assistance programs should be gradually replaced by more universal forms of social welfare, such as family allowances and child care centers*, which provide incentives for people to work and which break the cycle of dependency. Public assistance would be used only for those who have special handicaps that render them incapable of working.

We are not standing alone in calling for fundamental economic reform. There is an emerging consensus on the need for rational government involvement in the economy. For example, the question of a comprehensive industrial policy is being seriously discussed in a number of quarters, including position papers prepared for the Democratic presidential candidates.

As University of Michigan political scientist Ernest J. Wilson III points out, in a paper prepared for the Joint Center for Political Studies, "If the industrial policy rhetoric is converted into party political platforms, and the platforms become policy, then the ensuing shifts in the structure of national opportunity will dramatically affect black employment opportunities, prospects for education and training, access to business and personal credit, and a host of other aspects of black economic and social life." There are two reasons, therefore, why the black leadership should give serious attention to matters of economic organization: (1) the present arrangement of the economy has had deleterious consequences for large segments of the black population, most notably low-income blacks; and (2) if current discussions of economic reform—whether in the form of an industrial policy or a more comprehensive economic policy integrating industrial and labor market policies with social policies—ultimately become adopted as national policy, then the economic interests of blacks will have to be protected and promoted. Accordingly, black leaders, policymakers, and intellectuals

ought to be involved in every major step in the policy formation process, including what will surely be a debate on industrial policy in the formulation of the Democratic party platform in 1984.

The recommendations in this report should signal to interested parties that black thinkers are addressing the issue of economic organization in America and that black involvement in the formulation of economic policy is crucial if that policy is to receive sufficient political support.

# The Black Family

Accumulated social and economic pressures, feeding upon the long-standing effects of American racism, have produced a special crisis for the black family today. This crisis underlies many problems facing the black community, especially entrenched poverty, which is closely correlated to the pronounced vulnerability of the large and growing number of black families headed by single mothers. No strategy designed to improve the status of black Americans can ignore the central position of the black family as the natural transmitter of the care, values, and opportunities necessary for black men, women, and children to reach their full potential as individuals.

## THE ROOTS OF THE PRESENT CRISIS

The present black family crisis, characterized chiefly by the precipitous growth of poor female-headed households, can be traced almost directly to American racism. Black Americans came to this country as slaves from a society where family was the central framework for the organization of society itself. Black American family traditions derive from African societies that were organized around kinship and so committed to responsibility, even for the most distant of kin, that there were virtually no random or disconnected individuals, much less broken families. This heritage survived in America in the extended family, a continuing source of strength for blacks today.

But this strong family tradition had to contend first with the slave system, then with legal segregation, discrimination, and enforced poverty and finally with racially hostile governmental and societal policies, practices and attitudes. These forces have finally weakened a family fabric that had for generations proved unusually resilient, even in the face of awesome adversity. Indeed, until the 1960s, a remarkable 75 percent of black families included both husband and wife.

Since the 1960s, rapid urbanization, and especially ghettoization, has had a devastating impact on many black families. As large numbers of blacks migrated to large cities from rural areas, black males have often been unable to find work, and government policies and other social forces further

sapped family strength. These trends proceed apace today, aided by the widespread failure even to recognize the pressures on the black family as central to other problems and by the failure to devise both preventive and healing strategies.

## THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

The most serious manifestation of increasing difficulty in black family formation and stability is the recent sharp rise in female-headed households. Today 48 percent of black families with related children under 18 are headed by women and half of all black children under 18 live in female-headed households. These households are not inherently less appropriate for the care and raising of children. But the 1979 median income for black female-headed households was only $6,610 compared with close to $20,000 for all families. This and virtually every socioeconomic indicator confirm the unique difficulties such families encounter.

The rate of poverty among female-headed families has led many experts to conclude that American poverty is rapidly becoming a condition identified chiefly with women and children. Black birth patterns contribute disproportionately to this trend. In 1979, the majority of black births occurred to single mothers—in every part of the country, from Arkansas (54 percent) and Indiana (57 percent) to Wisconsin (63 percent) and New Jersey (60 percent).

Female-headed households arise from a number of different circumstances. A rising number emerge from teenage pregnancies, and a permanent male partner to contribute to the economic and other responsibilities of family life is absent from the start. The consequences are predictable. Children grow up with few consistent male role models. In many cases, the young mothers of these children are themselves hardly removed from childhood—their education is incomplete, their preparation for parenthood underdeveloped, and their own personal potential unfulfilled.

Even when female-headed households are not poor, such families often incur severe difficulties in maintaining family life. Black women are subject to both sex and race discrimination and are victims of an income gap that causes them to earn less than 60 percent of male income. When this diminished earning capacity is combined with the practical problems of full-time work, inadequate child-care arrangements, and the often total responsibility for child rearing, these women and their children are at considerable risk.

Also contributing to the growing number of female-headed households is the high rate of divorce and separation among black couples. About 34 percent of black female-headed households are the result of the break-up of marriages. Black marriages are beset with the special problems of their race

on top of the destabilizing forces that have injured the family life of virtually all Americans. The fragility of black family life is underscored by their higher rate of divorce and separation and their lower rate of remarriage, than those of other Americans.

## REBUILDING BLACK FAMILY STRUCTURE

Family-related factors such as these constitute an important key to understanding the continuing and resistant problems of black people today. The slowing of economic progress and the increase in poverty in the black community derive in no small part from the cumulative effect on families of racism and economic and social disadvantage. But policies and strategies that focus on the black family as a vehicle for providing and transmitting opportunities are in their infancy and urgently need development. Government, researchers, and community organizations alike can make vital contributions.

The rapid growth of female-headed households in particular can and must be reversed. Unfortunately, the government has no coherent programs or policies to address the problems that destabilize black families. Yet the cost to government of this neglect is great. Punitive and cost-cutting measures that focus on poor female household heads as undeserving recipients of government benefits have done nothing to control the growth of such households. Surely, it is time to admit that more fundamental solutions are necessary. Government has the resources to search for effective solutions. What is required is the political will.

By now it is beyond debate that *government assistance programs for poor mothers need to be completely reconceptualized and redesigned.* The only major program directed at poor female-headed families, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, was conceived as a stopgap measure to enable families to survive during periods of economic distress. The program has been stretched to cover families who are victims of racism and structural unemployment, but the results have been unsatisfactory. AFDC needs to be replaced with approaches that lead families toward economic independence. Considering the youth of most AFDC recipients, the dominant mission of any program that serves them should be to provide the requisite training and support to enable them to graduate from the AFDC program, just as the government provides funds to help other young women graduate from programs of higher education and specialized training.

Ultimately, the economic and human benefits of a program to equip poor single mothers for work will outweigh any investment by the government in such an approach. The responsiveness of black female household heads to job and education programs and the extraordinary desire they show for work suggest that this approach, if rigorously developed, would be immensely fruitful.

Moreover, if current patterns are to be reversed, preventive action will be as important as actions to help existing female-headed households. *Teenagers and young men and women need to be encouraged to pursue education, training, work and personal development while they delay pregnancy and family formation.* Birth rates for blacks of all backgrounds have dropped significantly over the last few decades; it is the proportion of births to single women that has grown. A specific focus on all aspects of family planning would build upon the success of black women and girls in fertility control. For young people, there is a special need for sex education and education about the importance to their own futures of delaying sex, pregnancy, and marriage. These and other strategies that encourage young people to believe in and prepare for the future are all a part of encouraging more stable family patterns. With greater community and government efforts, a significant reduction in premature pregnancies is obtainable by the end of this decade.

Private organizations and researchers also have an important contribution to make. With their creativity and flexibility, they have often pioneered solutions, such as legal services for the poor, that have been taken up by government. The Ford and Rockefeller foundations are currently funding programs that hold such promise. These programs, directed at minority single mothers, involve job development and training, utilization of resources such as community residents to assist single mothers, and child care. These initiatives could become useful models for larger programs to help single mothers become economically self-sufficient, dispel myths about the black family, and build upon the existing strengths of black family units.

A *major national goal for this decade should be to arrest the proliferation of disadvantaged female-headed black families.* Family reenforcement constitutes the single most important action the nation can take toward the elimination of black poverty and related social problems.

*The national interest also requires reenforcing the stability of black husband-wife families.* Black husband-wife families experienced growth in income during the 1970s, while black female-headed households retrogressed. If the increase in female-headed households had not occurred, black family income would have increased by 11.3 percent instead of decreasing by 5 percent. Black husband-wife families provide the foundation for a permanent black middle class.

Because its development has been delayed by barriers not experienced by other Americans, this new middle class needs uninterrupted access to education and job mobility to ensure its permanence. Technical training, higher education, and employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for members will reinforce family cohesion. Affirmative action in all these areas will be an important means of broadening access to middle-income opportunities.

Finally the black community itself, especially black organizations, constitute the natural leadership in any effort to help restore black famililes to their historic strength. Black institutions such as churches, civil rights organizations, fraternities, sororities, young people's groups, and other community organizations have been a source of strength to the black community over the years. The black family as a unit needs the strong, caring concern and protection of the black community, its innovative leadership and its strong organizational life. From family counseling to family planning, black organizations will often be in the best position to help and to guide.

The black family has been a brilliantly adaptive institution in a country where racial and economic hostility would long ago have destroyed a weaker family structure. But after 300 years of struggle and resiliency, black families need special attention. The historic creative capacities of the black family have been greatly taxed by today's conditions, but the family is still much revered among blacks. A focus on the black family in whatever form it is found has enormous potential to radiate improvements in the status of black people and to eliminate the problems that remain.

# Education

Traditionally, public education in the United States has been a key vehicle for upward mobility. The custodians of the American public school system have long prided themselves on their ability to maintain standards of educational quality that have supported this mobility and have made public education a foundation of American democracy.

For black Americans, however, public education has become an instrument for blocking rather than facilitating upward mobility. The failures of our public education system are reflected in the fact that blacks are disproportionately represented among the 72 million Americans who are functionally illiterate. One study reported that 47 percent of all black 17-year-olds are illiterate. Adult illiteracy is a problem of crisis proportions.

The public school education for black children must attack illiteracy at its source and prepare our young people to play a constructive role in an increasingly complex and technologically sophisticated economy. The pool of blacks in higher education needs to be expanded. We believe the stability of American society as a whole depends on the effective education of all children.

Three basic problems must be addressed:

1. the lack of access to *quality* public education for the vast majority of blacks in grades K-12;
2. the inadequate representation of black Americans in post-secondary education degree programs that will provide them with the skills necessary to succeed in a fast changing employment market; and
3. the disproportionate number of black adults who are functionally illiterate.

## K-12

*We believe it is imperative that policies be developed to attack the problems of public education on a national basis,* while allowing local communities to adhere to those policies in accordance with their particular characteristics and needs. *A continuing federal role in financing equal educational opportunity and enforcing school desegregation is essential to any effort to make the education of blacks more effective.*

In order to bring about substantial changes in grades K-12, *school districts must be held accountable for the achievement level of students.* Appropriate policies are also required to protect local school districts from crippling cutbacks in their operating budgets resulting from federal or state legislation.

We believe that all children are entitled to an education that will, at a minimum, provide them with the skills necessary to function effectively in this society. *Education policy should include workable vocational education programs and should emphasize basic skills as well as the development of computer and scientific literacy.*

Parents and the community have roles to play in promoting standards and motivating students to achieve academic excellence. Because victimized black families—teenage mothers, poor, female-headed households—are unable to provide the kind of early education and environment that their children need, an effective education policy requires an effective family policy.

## POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

*Equal educational opportunity is essential if there is to be an increase in the numbers and percentages of blacks with advanced degrees.* We must focus attention on the problems and prospects of both predominantly black institutions and predominantly white institutions that are attended by large numbers of black students. Because so many black students attend community colleges, revision of higher education master plans are required to increase the opportunity for black students to transfer between two-year and four-year public institutions and between these and research institutions offering post-graduate degrees.

Maintaining adequate student aid from private, state, and federal sources remains the most important way of ensuring the attendance of blacks in institutions of higher education. In addition, greater attention to tutoring and other retention measures will help make sure that students do not go through a revolving door from admissions to flunking out. Affirmative action programs, which provide black faculty and staff access to predominantly white institutions and enhance the learning environment for students in these institutions, must become more productive.

## ADULT ILLITERACY

Until K-12 schools are functionally effective for black people there will still be an adult illiteracy problem. *More community attention and effort at*

*the state, national, and local levels must be devoted to reducing illiteracy among adults*. Nothing more effectively cuts off employment opportunities and interferes with life's simplest tasks than the absence of full literacy.

The economic benefits from education are not the same for everyone. Whites with high school degrees, for example, have a higher mean income than blacks with college degrees. But everyone benefits from education, and without it some employment opportunities are absolutely out of the question.

We are convinced that dramatic improvement in the education of blacks is essential to the economic development—if not survival—of the black community. We are equally convinced that it is a realistic objective provided the custodians of the system as well as blacks themselves are willing to assign to educational excellence for all students the priority it must have and support the changes that will be required.

Appendix A

# Statement by the Black Leadership Forum

In March of this year, it was the good fortune of fourteen members of the Black Leadership Forum to participate in a conference at Wingspread in Racine, Wisconsin, co-sponsored by the Joint Center for Political Studies and the Johnson Foundation. This proved to be an intensive, mind-expanding exchange with the "Tarrytown Group" around many of the issues and proposals set forth in these papers.

If introspection, untested by the world outside, runs the risk of sterility, so it is equally true that action uninformed by serious analytical reflection can become reactive, rudderless, and unproductive.

The mutually respectful give and take of the session at Wingspread was particularly helpful to many of us in the forum. We had the opportunity—and the time—to work toward a more coherent framework for some of our concerns; to join in the challenging of some widely held assumptions; and to benefit from fresh perspectives which more clearly illuminated the past, the present and future of Black America, the nation and the world.

Just as those of us in the forum do not pretend to encompass the total spectrum of activist leadership especially concerned with race and poverty, so was it that the scholars with whom we met at Wingspread stressed the untapped potential represented by their absent colleagues in this country and abroad.

Most of us, in the course of the day-to-day work of our own organizations and of the forum, have drawn in one fashion or another on the expertise and wisdom of academicians and policy analysts. One result of the Wingspread meeting has been a stongly shared resolve to take greater advantage of the opportunities for creative interaction among those who from differing vantage points are attempting to find surer paths out of the critical economic, social, and cultural dilemmas that confront us all.

We hope that these papers will be among the most valuable tools for accomplishing that crucial task.

Black Leadership Forum

| Joseph E. Lowery | Dorothy I. Height | M. Carl Holman |
|---|---|---|
| Chairman | Vice Chairman | Executive Secretary/Treasurer |

Appendix B

# Participants in the Tarrytown Conferences, June 29-30, 1981, and November 19-21, 1982

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Appendix C

# Participants in the Wingspread Conference, Racine, Wisconsin, March 23-25, 1983

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The Joint Center for Political Studies is a national, nonprofit, tax-exempt institution that conducts research on public policy issues of special concern to black Americans and promotes informed and effective involvement of blacks in the political process. Founded in 1970, the Joint Center provides independent and nonpartisan analyses through research, publication, and outreach programs.

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